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TAGS: PGOV PREL UNSC LI XY
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE OFFERS LIBERIAN PRESIDENT SIRLEAF
CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UNMIL; WILL PUSH FOR UNSC VISIT

REF: A. USUN 278
1B. USUN 297

¶1. (SBU) On March 31 Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf called to thank Ambassador Rice for her expression of support for the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) during Security Council consultations held on March 19 (see refs. A and B).

President Sirleaf volunteered that an exit for UNMIL must eventually come, but insisted there is still "a lot of work" to do to get to that point. Ambassador Rice reiterated the U.S. would not allow a premature withdrawal from Liberia and was fully prepared to resist any French or UK push for accelerated troop reductions. Rice also praised President Sirleaf for her outstanding work and said the U.S. was completely behind her efforts.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Rice asked whether she should propose that the Security Council visit Liberia during its upcoming trip to Africa, noting it had been several years since the last Council visit. President Sirleaf strongly supported a visit, saying it would be best for the Council to see the reality on the ground and to talk directly with her. Rice said she would argue to include Liberia in any potential upcoming UNSC trip, which currently includes only stops in eastern Africa and the Great Lakes region.

Rice